I told them about the July days in the capital and the change in the mood of the garrison after the failure of the Bolshevist conspiracy. "Extremist demagoguery is not dead," I said, "but the Communists have been licked. Their prestige has been shaken. We can try to use this moment to weed out their influence in the army and restore unity among the troops on a platform of national defense and democratic discipline." Kuchin and his comrades agreed that this plan was timely, and we started to outline our campaign. My task was to bring to our side the troops that refused to recognize the authority of the Iskosol —the Lettish battalions and notorious Communist regiments.

That same evening I called on General Parsky and told him about our plans. He listened quietly, chewing his lips, and then remarked, as if thinking aloud, "Surely it will take time to make first-rate crack troops out of confused and embittered men. But you are on the right track in trying to start with restoring unity and self-confidence among them. Disicipline and military valor will come afterward."

I looked at the old man in surprise. He went on, "I don't understand anything about politics, parties, or programs. But I have spent all my life in service, and I know the Russian soldier. He is good. At times he is the best soldier in the world. At other times he is not much to look at. He is superb in an offensive—cheerful and fearless. But when he takes to his heels, the cavalry cannot catch up with him. A remarkable soldier! If you distrust him, he will make a fool of you and himself. If you trust him, he will go to his death just to show you how good he is."

I asked the general what he thought of the demands of the Supreme Command that capital punishment be restored for certain military crimes.

"That is politics," he replied. "This is not my field. You cannot run an army without compulsion. The heaviest crimes must draw the heaviest punishment. But the threat of punishment alone will not change the spirit of the army. Can you make a desperate man or a drunk or a fool behave by threatening him with court-martial?"

After a moment of silence he continued, "Psychology is part of our trade. When I was commanding a division, I noticed that our artillery gave little support to the infantry. Then I thought I found the reason. The artillerymen and infantrymen did not know one another. I began to arrange joint parties and urged all our units to do the same. Whenever infantry officers came together to play cards or drink, they must include artillery officers. I encouraged the soldiers to go to the batteries when there was some celebration. Some of the officers thought, 'Parsky is crazy,' but we got results. All the divisions around us had the usual troubles between the two services, but on my sector everything clicked . . . more or less. . . ."